Draft
Environmental Assessment

Salmon Lake State Park
Paving and Campground Improvement Project

March 2008

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Salmon Lake State Park Paving and Campground Improvement Project Draft Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action**: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to initiate a road-paving and campground improvement project within Salmon Lake State Park to be completed in multiple phases. In the first phase, the day-use loop road and parking areas would be paved, a cable-mat for the swim dock installed, the boat staging area widened, and improvements made to the boat docks. In subsequent phases, as funds become available, electrical pedestals would be installed at all campsites and the interior campground road and campsites would be paved.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, which directs Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of state parks.

   Furthermore, state statute 23-1-110 MCA and ARM 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

3. **Name of project:** Salmon Lake State Park Paving and Improvement Project.

4. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):** Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks is the project sponsor**.**

5. **Construction Timeline:**
   Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Spring 2008
   Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2008
   Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 50

6. **Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):**
   Salmon Lake State Park is located in Lake County (see Figure 1), T16N R03W S24.

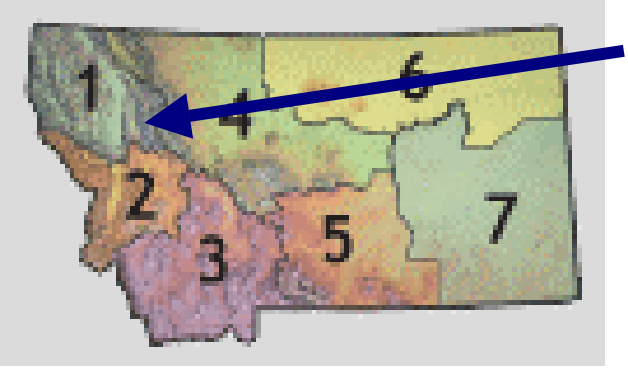

Figure 1. State map showing approximate location of Salmon Lake State Park.

7. Project size -- number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	42	Dry cropland	0
		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	0	Rangeland	0
		Other	0

8. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: permits will be filed at least 2 months prior to project start.

Agency Name	Permit
DEQ	SWPPP (Storm water Pollution Prevention Plan)

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Fish, Wildlife & Parks	$300,000 phase 1 $400,000 additional phases

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
N/A	

6. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Salmon Lake State Park is a 42-acre park along the beautiful Clearwater River chain of lakes in western Montana (see Figure 2). The park includes a day-use area with a boat-launch, swim dock, latrines, picnic areas, and day-parking; and a separate campground area with 23 camping sites, a campground host, shower and restroom facilities, an amphitheater and hiking trails (see Figure 3). The park is extremely popular, with approximately 35,000 visitors annually, mainly in the summer months.

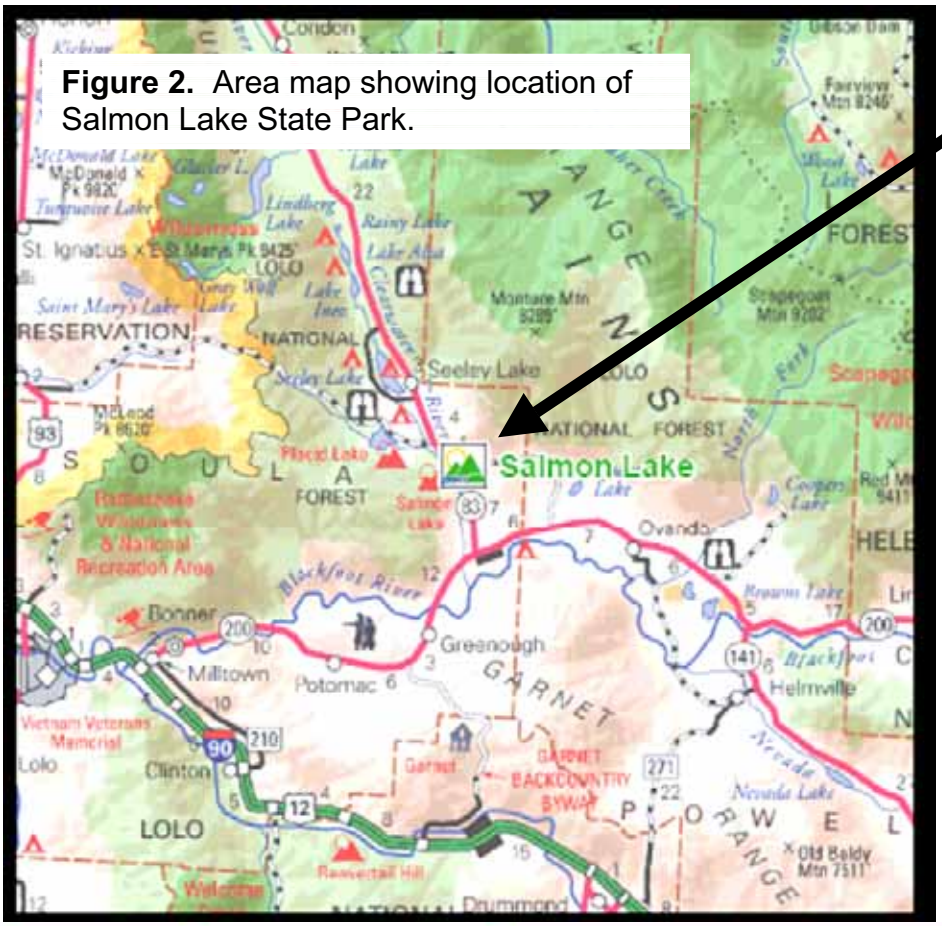

Figure 2. Area map showing location of Salmon Lake State Park.

Figure 3. Site map of Salmon Lake State Park.

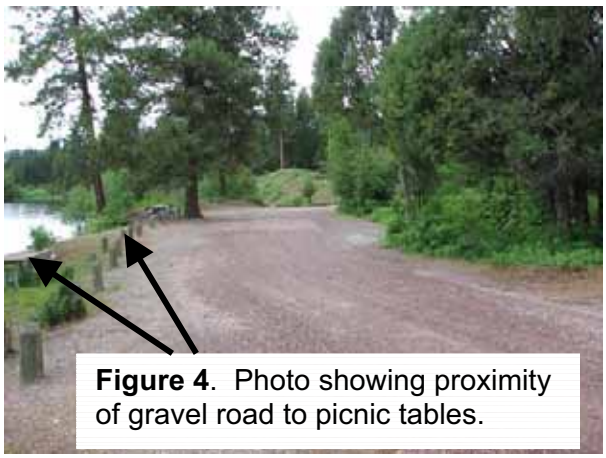

Figure 4. Photo showing proximity of gravel road to picnic tables.

The popularity of the park and the corresponding number of vehicles in the park has been an issue for several years. Currently the majority of the park road surface is gravel with a low percentage of aggregate stone and high percentage of finely ground organic material and silt. During the summer peak use season the park road generates large clouds of dust with every passing vehicle, especially in the lower loop and park entrance area. This dust gets into people's eyes, nose and mouth, blows onto picnic tables and food (see Figure 4), blows into RV's and tents, and covers everything with a fine layer. Visitors love this beautiful park, but complain earnestly about the amount of dust they encounter. The dust not only detracts from visitor's experience, but also creates safety hazards and health issues for people with any type of respiratory distress. The current gravel/organic road surface also generates mud during inclement weather.

FWP has tried to reduce the dust and particulate level at the park for years, with limited success. FWP has applied magnesium chloride (MgCl), approved by DEQ for this purpose, as dust abatement for the past five years, but this compound requires some water to be effective, and there is minimal moisture or relative humidity in the peak of the summer season in this area when dust abatement is needed the most. In addition, park managers suspect that the magnesium chloride, a salt product, combined with drought and insect attack may be having a negative impact on the trees along park roads.

An additional problem related to the gravel surface is that parking areas cannot be permanently striped (see Fig. 6) and available space is therefore used very inefficiently. During peak usage days in the summer, interior parking areas fill up because of improper parking, and additional visitors either circle repeatedly, creating congestion and stirring up dust; or park in vegetated or other prohibited areas, even on the shoulder of Hwy 83. When visitors park in front of the boat ramp, boaters do not have a staging area, and the entire area becomes clogged. Because the main loop circles in front of the boat ramp, when that area becomes congested a traffic jam results that can stretch past the entrance booth and almost to Hwy 83. This creates a serious safety hazard as visitors attempting to enter the park find they do not have sufficient room to pull their entire rig and trailer off the highway.

Figure 6. Photo showing large, unstriped parking area which leads to inefficient parking.

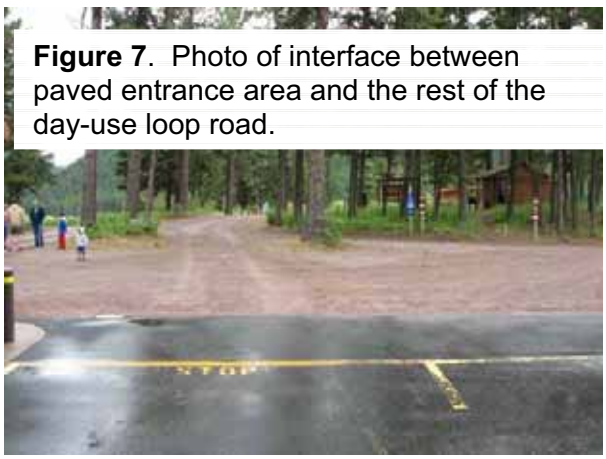

Figure 7. Photo of interface between paved entrance area and the rest of the day-use loop road.

The number of vehicles does not usually exceed available spaces that theoretically exist, but poor parking reduces parking space drastically. Signs informing people of where and how they should park are abundant in the park, but are often ignored. FWP has had up to two park rangers monitoring the day-use area and getting users to park efficiently and in the proper areas, but this represents a very high use of personnel and is an unpleasant job in the heat and dust.

The entrance of the day-use area was paved several years ago for the health and comfort of booth attendants and users waiting in line (see Fig. 7), and, based on public surveys and visitor comments, FWP feels it is time to pave the rest of the road system in the park. FWP proposes paving all interior roads and parking surfaces, including campground spurs (see Fig. 8), with hot asphalt. Creating a hardened road surface would nearly eliminate airborne particulate, which would appreciably improve air quality and visitor experience. Paving would also allow speed bumps to be installed where needed, and for the lining and striping of the road and parking areas. Parking areas would also be converted from parallel parking into head-in stalls, which also helps correct parking inefficiencies in a cost effective manner with minimal expansion.

Striping the parking areas would better delineate long-term parking areas from staging and prepping areas, and would force users to park correctly without the constant supervision of park personnel. Using the available space efficiently would increase the number of vehicles that the park can accommodate, and lesson the incidence of unsafe parking on the highway shoulder or in other prohibited areas. Increased parking efficiency would also contribute to better traffic flow.

The staging area in front of the boat ramp would also be slightly widened as part of the paving project, which will reduce congestion at the ramp and allow for better traffic flow. Some other improvements to the day-use area that are planned as part of this project are to add concrete aprons/approaches to the two roll-in docks adjacent to the boat ramp, and to install a precast concrete cable-mat for the swim dock. The purpose for the concrete aprons is to better facilitate installation, maintenance and removal of the roll-in docks, to stabilize the lake shore at these locations and to improve ADA accessibility. The cable mat at the swim dock would also improve user access.

The paving project would be completed in multiple phases for budgetary reasons. The day-use loop road and parking areas would be paved in the first phase. The electrical pedestals for the 23 campsites and the paving of the interior campground loop road would occur in subsequent phases when funding was available.

The design of the proposed electrification project is such that all utility connections will be underground with only the pedestals at the campsites visible. This design will limit the intrusion of man-made objects to the natural environment of the park. The trenching of the conduits will require some disturbance of native vegetation and road crossings, which is why all electrical work would be completed before beginning paving work in the campground. FWP is planning to prohibit trenching within 10-15 feet of mature trees to limit potential impact to them. (See Part II for a more in depth discussion of potential impacts.) Preliminary designs include the installation of a new transformer and electrical panel to upgrade the electrical infrastructure to required levels in order to support the pedestals.

FWP managers want to provide electric services to users of Salmon Lake State Park based on demand from campers. Over 50% of overnight visitors to the Park use motor homes or full-size travel trailers for their accommodations, and almost all would like on-site electricity. Furthermore, many visitors complain that noise from generators used in the park is excessive and detracts from their experience. In addition to providing power for visitor's RV's, the campsite outlets will allow visitors to recharge boating equipment, cell phones, and other electronic equipment.

Figure 8. Photo showing typical campground spur.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken, the interior park roads and parking areas within Salmon Lake State Park would not be paved, and as a secondary part of that project, electric pedestals would not be added to each campsite. Other small improvements to the day-use area, such as a cable mat for the swim dock and concrete aprons to the boat ramp would not be implemented. This alternative would not resolve the issues impacting public health and safety or natural resource protection (tree stresses from chemical agents). By choosing the "No Action" alternative, the known safety, resource, and aesthetic issues at Salmon Lake State Park would not be addressed. The roads will continue to generate high levels of dust during the summer season, causing irritation and discomfort to park visitors and workers, sometimes severe. The gravel surface also prohibits permanent road paint from being applied, which causes inefficient parking and confusion. Incorrectly parked vehicles sometimes block the staging area for the boat ramp, which slows the flow of traffic around the main loop in the day-use area and can cause traffic jams to reach all the way to the Park entrance. This situation represents a significant safety hazard.

If electrical service is not added to campsites, noise from generators will continue to be high, which detracts from the recreational experiences of both traditional campers and RV users alike. If no action is taken, the public will likely continue to register many concerns and complaints about the lack of on-site electricity and road and parking conditions in Salmon Lake State Park.

Alternative B: Proposed Action-pave all interior road and parking surfaces in multiple phases beginning with day-use area and electrify the campsites.

In the preferred Alternative, FWP would proceed with plans to pave all interior road and parking surfaces within the park with a 2" lift of asphalt and install electric pedestals at the campsites. In this Alternative, the day-use loop road, parking and staging areas would be paved in the first phase, and roads and campground spurs would be paved in a later phase. Several small improvements to the day-use areas would also be implemented as part of the first phase, such as widening the boat-staging area, adding concrete aprons to the boat docks, installing a cable mat on the swim dock, and converting parallel parking areas into head-in stalls. Also in a later phase, electric pedestals would be provided for all 23 campsites and necessary electrical infrastructure would be installed prior to the paving.

FWP managers prefer this alternative because funds do not exist to complete the entire project at once, and managers feel that while the need for paving all areas is strong, it is most urgent at the day-use area. FWP managers feel that Alternative B would best safeguard public health, safety, and environmental resources in the park as well as increasing the enjoyment of the park by visitors while staying within budget.

Alternative C: Proposed Action-pave all interior road and parking surfaces in multiple phases beginning with campground and electrify the campsites.
This Alternative is identical to Alternative B except that the campground road and parking spurs would be paved first, and then the day-use area in the later phase. The electric pedestals would be installed prior to the paving of the campground. This is not the preferred Alternative because FWP managers feel that the problems at the day-use area are most urgent, and want to see those problems addressed in 2008. The issues in the campground require attention as well, but are not as severe as at the day-use area.

Alternative D: Pave day-use area only and electrify the campsites.
In this Alternative, the day-use loop road, parking and staging areas would be paved but not any roads or spurs in the campground. This alternative would be cheaper, but is not preferred because the dust problems caused by the campground road would continue. The electric pedestals would be installed in the campground in a later phase.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

There are no formal stipulations of mitigation or other controls associated with the proposed action. This action does not involve any permits or granting of a license on which stipulations would be placed.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		x				1a
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			1b
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. This project will not create any soil instability or changes in geologic substructure.

1b. Soil structure and permeability should be improved by curtailing the use of Magnesium chloride for dust control. Magnesium chloride is a salt, which changes soil structure and can inhibit moisture uptake by plants. Surfacing the road should eliminate the need for dust abatement, and the salts applied in past years should eventually leach away from the soil and root zone.

The design of the proposed project will require the digging of trenches for all the infrastructure improvements, as well as, for the conduits connecting each of the pedestals to one another and to the electrical panel. The trenches are expected to be 24” in depth and approximately 10” in width to accommodate a 3” conduit and necessary fill material.

The boat staging area in the day-use area will also be widened by 1900 sq. ft, and some parallel parking areas will be enlarged and converted to head-in stalls. This modification would result in approximately 3400 sq. ft. of additional parking area, which represents less than a 25% expansion.

1c. This project will not destroy or cover any unique geologic or physical features.

1d. The road system in the park drains into predominantly vegetated areas. Surfacing the road is unlikely to cause any changes in sedimentation or drainage patterns into Salmon Lake.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X positive			2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X positive			2b.
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)						
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Paving should dramatically reduce dust from the road. This would improve air quality in the general vicinity of the park road during the summer season. Particulate (dust) from vehicle traffic on the road currently creates health and safety issues on the road and an unpleasant experience for park visitors. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions will be created by heavy equipment during construction, but would end after completion of the project.

2b. Providing electrical service to campsites would reduce the use of generators, which can sometimes create objectionable petroleum-based odors.

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3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		x				3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		yes	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)						
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)						
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. The proposed construction of concrete aprons at the boat docks and the installation of a concrete cable mat at the swim dock is not expected to impact water quality because construction will occur in the fall when water levels are below the work site.

3b. Run-off patterns from water leaving the road surface may be altered by the project in some areas. Best Management Practices would be used during paving to mitigate any sediment entering the lake. These can include but are not limited to constructing gravel bars to trap sediment, sediment

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fencing, directing run-off into vegetative zones and developing sediment catch basins. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) Permit from the Department of Environmental Quality will be applied for and followed.

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in?**	**IMPACT ***				**Can Impact Be Mitigated ***	**Comment Index**
	Unknown *	**None**	**Minor ***	**Potentially Significant**		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		yes	4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?						
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. The proposed paving project includes some redesign of traffic flow and additional designated parking stalls. The additional parking stalls will result in the removal of some vegetation and base preparation to provide sufficient clearances for parking and through traffic. No vegetation will be removed along the shoreline of Salmon Lake. Overall vegetative condition should improve/benefit in the future by not being exposed to annual applications of magnesium chloride. Also, striping the parking areas in the day-use area after paving would reduce the incidence of visitors unlawfully parking in vegetated areas.

The proposed electrical work would require the disturbance and/or removal of some grasses, forbs, and small shrubs. The design will attempt to minimize disturbance by running lines along roadways whenever possible. No mature trees would be removed. To minimize potential impacts caused by trenching for the electrical lines, no digging will occur within 10ft of mature trees.

4b. Please see comment 4a.

4c. Two plant species of concern are documented within Salmon Lake State Park. These and other plant species would be expected to benefit from the proposed action because they would not continue to be exposed to applications of magnesium chloride. The two plant species of concern are not located in areas where the proposed electrical work would occur. Please see Appendix 2 for a complete discussion of species of concern found in the Salmon Lake State Park area.

4e. Noxious weed control BMPs would be followed throughout the project zone by the contractor under supervision of FWP. Noxious weed control will follow guidelines outlined in the FWP Region 2 Weed Management Plan, which includes the use of herbicides and mechanical methods.

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** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?			X			5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		x				5g.
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)						
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)						
j. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish and Wildlife (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

5a. Impacts to fish habitat would be minimized by implementing stream/riparian mgmt zone BMP's. Road improvements directly adjacent to the lake would move all work away from the water's edge with appropriate measures to prevent sediments from entering the surface waters. During construction standard BMP's would be used to mitigate any sediment entering the lake. These can include but are not limited to constructing gravel bars to trap sediment, sediment fencing, directing runoff into vegetative zones and development of sediment catch basins.

5b. The proposed project is unlikely to cause any negative impacts to animal species within the park or greater area. However, the proposed action would improve air quality within the project area. Any surface discharge that did occur during the project would be unlikely to affect trout populations within Salmon Lake, as warm summer temperatures cause trout to seek deeper water away from the shallow zones along the shore.

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5f. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database showed the possible presence of two animal species of concern and one threatened species within the greater Salmon Lake State Park area. Please see Appendix 2 for a complete discussion of species of concern found in the Salmon Lake State Park area.

5g. There may be intermittent and temporary displacement of animals due to noise and activity during the three to four month construction period.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. There would be a temporary increase in noise level during implementation of the proposed action, but would end after completion of the project. It is unlikely that any residences would be affected by the noise. The level of noise from generators would be reduced after implementation of the electrical work.

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7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a.
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. There would be no alteration or interference with the existing land use in the greater Salmon Lake State Park area.

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*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?			X postive			8b.
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X positive			8c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)						
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a. There is a slight risk of small petroleum leaks or spills from heavy equipment during the proposed paving project. This risk can be minimized by the use of Best Management Practices (BMP's) during all phases of the project.

Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds within the park, which is traditionally completed by a contractor. The licensed professional would conduct weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures.

8b. The proposed project would improve traffic flow and maneuverability with the park, thereby improving access for emergency vehicles.

8c. Besides improving traffic flow and maneuverability, the proposed project would increase available parking with the park; reducing the incidence of visitors parking on the shoulder of Highway 83.

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**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?			X positive			9a.
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X positive			9e.
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9a. The proposed project may have a small positive impact on the town of Seeley Lake by increasing tourism and providing a better recreational experience for locals. Traffic safety would also be improved in the vicinity of the State Park (see Comment 9e).

9e. The proposed project would improve traffic flow, maneuverability, and available parking within the park which would reduce the incidence of visitors parking on the shoulder of Highway 83.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:			X			10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X			10d.
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e.
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10a. The proposed action will require the establishment of new underground electrical conduit lines between existing and possibly, new transformers in order to provide electricity to new outlet pedestals.

10d. The proposed electrification of the campgrounds at Salmon Lake State Park is expected to increase the park's consumption of electricity since many visitors will use the new service to power their RV's and peripheral equipment.

10e. The cost of the project is estimated at $300,000 for Phase 1 and $400,000 for additional phases. Funding would come from Federal Wallop-Breaux grant money and from FWP's Capitol Improvement Fund.

10f. Under the preferred alternative, the project would eliminate the need for road grading and dust abatement within the Park, and short-term maintenance costs would be sharply reduced. In 10-15 years some pavement maintenance would likely be necessary. Alternatives with less projected paving would necessarily continue to require substantial yearly road maintenance.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X			11c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)						
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

11c. The proposed action will improve the quality of the aesthetics and recreational experience for many visitors to Salmon Lake State Park. Surfacing the road would greatly decrease dust, improving the visitor experience at the park. However, the proposed project is not expected to significantly increase day-use of the park, which is already at capacity most summer weekends. Overnight visitation in the campground would likely increase as a result of the improvements.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)						
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. The proposed action would occur within the existing road right of way and would not impact cultural or historic resources. SHPO consultation would occur prior to electrification of the campsites.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)			X			13a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)						
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13a. This EA found no significant impacts to the human or physical environment from the proposed action. Negative cumulative impacts from this project are not expected.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This EA did not reveal any significant negative impacts to the physical and human environment stemming from the proposed action. It is unlikely that any threatened or endangered species would be affected, and no unique or physical features would be disturbed. The proposed action would benefit visitors to Salmon Lake State Park by improving the ease and safety of vehicular travel within the Park in addition to providing a more positive recreational experience. Providing electrical service at the Park's campsites would cater to the requests of visitors and reduce noise from electrical generators. Disruption of wildlife, recreation, and other public uses at Salmon Lake State Park would be temporary and occur intermittently during the construction period. Following the completion of the project, resource impacts would likely be minimized through better defined roadways which aid in preventing user-pioneered road and parking areas, less road dust particulate being generated in the air, and discontinued use of dust abatement chemicals.

The proposed project would increase public health, safety, and comfort while in the park, and environmental resources would be better protected. In short, the proposed project would considerably increase visitor enjoyment of Salmon Lake State Park without causing significant adverse affects to the environment.

PART V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. **Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**
   The public will be notified by way of a statewide press release, legal notices in the *Missoulian*, *Seeley Lake Pathfinder*, and the *Helena Independent Record*, and by public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page:
   http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices. Individual notices will be sent to the region's standard EA distribution list and to those that have requested one.

   Duration of comment period:
   A 30-day comment period is proposed. This level of public involvement is appropriate for this scale of project. Public notice will run from February 29, 2008 to March 31, 2008.

   Comments should be sent to:
   Lee Bastian, Region 2 Parks Manager
   3201 Spurgin Rd,
   Missoula, MT 59804
   lbastian@mt.gov

PART VI. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

Based on an evaluation of the primary, secondary, and cumulative impacts to the physical and human environment under the Montana Environmental Protection Act (MEPA), this environmental review found no significant impacts from the proposed project. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur, growth-inducing or growth inhibiting aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected, and precedent that would be set as a result of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. Therefore, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Lee Bastian	Chris Lorentz	Linnaea Schroeer-Smith
R-2 Parks Manager	Park Manager	Independent Contractor
3201 Spurgin Road	P.O. Box 136	912 Dearborn Ave
Missoula, MT 59804	Seeley Lake, MT	Helena, MT 59601
(406)542-5517	(406)677-6804	(406)495-9620

3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Parks Division
- Wildlife Division
- Fisheries Division
- Design & Construction Bureau

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

APPENDIX 1
HB495
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date April 30, 2007 **Person Reviewing** Linnaea Schroeer-Smith

Project Location: Salmon Lake State Park, T15 N, R14W, Section 5; and, T16N, R14W, Section 32.

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to pave all interior road and parking surfaces within Salmon Lake State Park.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check _ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

[ ] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: None

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: None

[X]C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: The expansion of the staging and parking areas in the day-use area will require the excavation of more than 20 c.y. of material. Please see Comment 1b. on page 10 of this document.

[ ] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: The proposed project would affect only existing roads and parking areas.

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: None.

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: None

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: None

10/99sed

[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: None. All new electrical lines would be buried.

[ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: None.

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: None

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX 2

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the Salmon Lake State Park area.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (nhp.nris.state.mt.us/eoportal) indicates no known occurrences of federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed threatened or endangered plant or animal species in the proposed project site.

Montana Species of Concern. The term **"Species of Concern"** includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

Status Ranks (Global and State)

The international network of Natural Heritage Programs employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (**G** -- range-wide) and state status (**S**) (NatureServe 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are “at-risk”. Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks -- the number, size and distribution of known “occurrences” or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, and threat. Factors in a species’ life history that make it especially vulnerable are also considered (e.g., dependence on a specific pollinator).

Status Ranks

Code	Definition
G1 S1	At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G2 S2	At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G3 S3	Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.
G4 S4	Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.
G5 S5	Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

1. *Gavia immer* (Common Loon)

State: **S2B**
Global: **G5**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

Nesting pairs of loons have been observed on Salmon Lake for several decades. Loons are fairly secretive and shy and do not tend to nest near areas of heavy human use. According to Element Occurrence maps, loons are generally found on the northern end of Salmon Lake but not in the State Park area, so the proposed project would be unlikely to affect this species.

2. *Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi* (Westslope Cutthroat Trout)

State: **S2**
Global: **G4T3**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

Populations of westslope cutthroat trout occur in Salmon Lake, but would be unlikely to be affected by the proposed project, as warm summer temperatures cause trout to seek deeper water away from the shallow zones along the shore where any surface discharge might occur.

3. *Bidens beckii* (Beck Water-marigold)

State: **S2**
Global: **G4**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

The proposed project would occur only over existing roads and parking areas, and thus would not negatively impact vegetation within the park. The project would benefit park vegetation by ending the need for applications of magnesium chloride, which can poison plants and impair soil structure.

4. *Nymphaea tetragona ssp. leibergii* (Pygmy Water-lily)

State: **S1**
Global: **G5**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service:
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

The proposed project would occur only over existing roads and parking areas, and thus would not negatively impact vegetation within the park. The project

would benefit park vegetation by ending the need for applications of magnesium chloride, which can poison plants and impair soil structure.

5. *Lynx canadensis* (Canada lynx)

State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT**
U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status**

No observations of lynx have occurred within Salmon Lake State Park for several decades, and it is unlikely that the proposed project would impact this species.

Interested parties may contact MFWP Region 7 offices for a detailed map of sensitive species Element Occurrences (EOs).

Information courtesy of Montana Natural Heritage Program.

ATTACHMENTS
A. Tourism Report
B. SHPO letter of clearance

ATTACHMENT A
TOURISM REPORT
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Marketing
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
1424 9th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Salmon Lake State Park Road Paving and Campground Improvement Project

Project Location: Salmon Lake State Park, Lake County.

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes paving all roads and parking areas within Salmon Lake State Park. Paving the roads would significantly reduce dust and improve air quality, particularly during the summer; and paving the parking areas would allow for pavement striping and increased parking efficiency at this popular park. In addition, FWP proposes to provide electrical service to all 22 campsites at the Park, which would allow visitors to power their RV's without using generators.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

As described, the project has the potential to have a positive impact on the tourism economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

As described, the project has the potential to positively impact the quality and quantity of tourism/recreation opportunities and settings.

Signature Carol Crockett Date Feb. 14, 2008

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
225 North Roberts ❖ P.O. Box 201201 ❖ Helena, MT 59620-1201
❖ (406) 444-2694 ❖ FAX (406) 444-2696 ❖ www.montanahistoricalsociety.org ❖

FWP FILE #710.2/790.2 PLACID LAKE STATE PARK/SALMON LAKE STATE PARK PAVING

I have conducted a cultural resource file search for the above-cited project located in Section 28, T16N R15W, Section 5, T15N R14W, and Section 32, T16N R14W. According to our records there have been a few previously recorded sites within the designated search locales. In addition to the sites there have been a few previously conducted cultural resource inventories done in the areas.

We feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. However, should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during this project we would ask that our office be contacted and the site investigated. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE ❖ 1410 8th Ave ❖ P.O. Box 2012
❖ (406) 444-7715 ❖ FAX (406) 444-6575